



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Announces Winners of the 2014 Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29, 2014—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the selection of 30 university students to attend USDA's 2014 Agricultural Outlook Forum, titled "The Changing Face of Agriculture," to be held Feb. 20- 21, 2014, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Va. Twenty university juniors and seniors were chosen on the basis of their essays on "Agriculture as a Career," and 10 graduate students were selected for their response to "The Greatest Challenge Facing Agriculture over the Next Five Years."

"The future of agriculture and rural America depends on the upcoming generation of leaders in farming, ranching and conservation, and the students selected to attend the Agricultural Outlook Forum are among the best young leaders our country has to offer," said Vilsack. "Participating in the Agricultural Outlook Forum will expose these students to a variety of perspectives on this country's most pressing agricultural challenges and lay the groundwork for bright futures in food, fiber and forestry."

USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program is designed to introduce students to contemporary agribusiness, future trends, scientific research, and agricultural policy in today's real world environment. The students are from land-grant, Hispanic-serving, and non land-grant agricultural and renewable resources universities. Since the program's start in 2007, annual sponsorship has been provided by CHS, Inc. and Farm Credit. USDA's Economic Research Service, Agricultural Research Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service also provide support. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore partners with USDA to make the program possible. Several of the 2014 winning essays are found here:

www.usda.gov/oc/forums/diversity/diversity_program.htm.

The undergraduate student winners are: Tyler Blocker, Tuskegee University; Brytann Busick, Oregon State University; Kenneth Callier, Delaware State University; Skylar Christensen, Utah State University; Ralph Evans, University of Arizona, Yuma; Meredith Frisius, California Polytechnic State University; Y'Tarius Goldsberry, Alcorn State University; Chelsea Grainger, University of Maryland Eastern Shore; Bryan Gutierrez, Miami Dade College; Simone Hairston, North Carolina A&T State University; Dajonna Hall, Prairie View A&M University; Randy Juste, Florida International University; Jimeca Lawrence, Fort Valley State University; Pinzhang Li, University of Maryland, College Park; Ruben Sanchez, California State University, Bakersfield; Kaitlyn Sanson, Oklahoma State University; Harry Schonberger, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University; Dustin Smith, University of Minnesota, Crookston; Kerry Snyder, University of Delaware; and Meghan Vaill, Cornell University.

The graduate student winners are: Sherry Blackmon, Mississippi State University; Moonyoung Choi, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University; Luis Colon-Otero, Universidad Metropolitana; Adebola (Kemi) Daramola, University of Maryland Eastern Shore;

Jessica Gilbert, University of Florida; Christian Gonzales, Florida International University; Hector Hernandez, New Mexico State University; Megan Holmes, Texas State University – San Marcos; Jose Luis Perez, Texas A&M University, College Station; and Keiko Tuttle, Washington State University.

Registration for the public, two-day event is \$375. Plenary speeches will be webcast after 6:00 p.m. EST on Feb. 21. Program details and registration information are available at www.usda.gov/oce/forum.

Writers, reporters, and editors may call Press Room Coordinator Mike Illenberg at (202) 694-5448 or Forum Coordinator Brenda Chapin at 202-720-5447 for more details.

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